



Supporting Families Together Association

Quarterly Newsletter

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this issue

YoungStar Micro-Grants at Work P. 1-2

Providing Outdoor Play for Infants and Toddlers P. 3-4

Child Care for Working Families Act P. 5

Staff Spotlight & PD Department Highlight P. 6

Resources & Updates P. 7

Staff & Board P. 8

WINTER ISSUE

In this issue you can find early childhood policy updates, SFTA programming highlights and useful resources and updates.

SFTA is Interactive

Please join our social media to be even more connected with SFTA through:

- Trends & News
- Local Events
- Training Resources
- Policy & Advocacy
- Success Stories

...and much more!

YoungStar Micro-Grants at Work

Kids at First Child Care Center in Rice Lake was excited to recently receive their second micro-grant as a YoungStar participating program. Karin Lindau, the Director, worked closely with the program’s Technical Consultant, Lisa Cottrell, on planning how to best use the micro-grant funds to add onto their outdoor play area.

“Planning how to use the micro-grant was a lot of fun,” said Karin. “Lisa was great about helping.”

Together, Karin, a co-worker and Lisa planned what activity areas to add to the outdoor area, and made a list of materials that could be purchased using the micro-grant funds to create those areas. From there, Karin and Lisa worked with Supporting Families Together Association Micro-Grant Program Specialists to purchase or receive reimbursement for the needed materials.

Karin emphasized that being able to buy locally and receive reimbursement, an option that the SFTA Micro-Grant Program has brought to the forefront in the last year,

really allowed her to make the most of her funding.

“The grant made it possible to be able to do all of it in one swoop instead of just little chunks,” stated Karin. “It just feels like we are dreaming when we get \$1,000 for a grant.”



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YoungStar Micro-Grants at Work

Using creativity, micro-grant funds and donated time from parishioners at the church where the program is housed, they bought lumber and built gardening beds for the kids to plant, harvest and sample seasonal vegetables. High school students volunteered to paint colorful murals on the back of the church shed that faces the playground and the micro-grant funds covered the paint.

Lisa and Karin worked together to build a water play area using a lattice and purchased attachments so that kids could funnel, dump and play with water outdoors. A sound wall with various materials and instruments was built for kids



to experiment with sound, and a large weaving loom was constructed and woven through with scarves and fabric for sensory and gross motor play. Finally, they added a shaded area for kids to go to read or have quiet time. All of the new outdoor activities were in place for several months before cold weather hit, allowing children and staff to put the areas to use this past summer and fall.

"The new activities just give the kids a lot more choices," said Karin, "and it just seems like it's less chaos."



Providing Outdoor Play for Infants and Toddlers

Here in Wisconsin, winter months may feel like a difficult time of the year for getting the little ones to engage in daily outdoor play. From the stress of getting all those small hands and feet into mittens and boots or snowsuits to parents who may not send in appropriate winter clothing, it may seem like there are way too many challenges to overcome.

Along with cold weather comes stuffy, closed up classrooms which allow an increase in germs spreading among children and staff. Many people believe going outside in cold or wet weather can cause colds or sickness; however, colds and flu are caused by germs, like bacteria and viruses. When children and staff spend long hours together indoors, illness spreads easily as everyone re-breathes germs throughout the day. One way to freshen the air indoors is to open the doors and windows in the classroom from 15 minutes before the children arrive. This allows the fresh air to circulate throughout the classroom and clear some of the germs out of the air.

Fresh air is beneficial and outdoor play, even when it is cold outside, can help keep children and staff healthy. The outdoor play provided to infants and toddlers during child care may be the only opportunity they have to engage in daily outdoor active physical play.

As Thelma Harms, one of the authors of the Environment Rating Scales has said, "there is no bad weather, only bad clothes."

Wisconsin DCF licensing rules require that programs provide daily outdoor activities except during inclement weather or when not advisable for health reasons. The recommendation is a least twice daily.

When planning high quality outdoor play experiences for infants and toddlers keep the following in mind:

- Explain to parents and staff the benefits of outdoor play to children's

physical, cognitive and social development and the foundation it builds for literacy, math and science concepts.

- Develop a strong outdoor play policy for your program and encourage parents to provide appropriate outdoor clothing as well as a change of clothes in case children get wet or dirty. Start a clothing donation box so your program has extra clothing on hand.

- Encourage teachers to bring appropriate outdoor clothing that will allow them to engage in outdoor play with children. Teacher participation can stimulate and enrich outdoor play and maximize learning opportunities for children.

- Provide appropriate space for walkers, crawlers and non-mobile children. For non-mobile infants, a large tarp or play mat over the snow adds a layer of protection from the cold and wet. Blankets can be placed over the tarp or mat for added warmth.

- Use drop off and pick up times when the temperature is not too cold to be outside where children are already dressed warmly coming from their transport vehicles.



Wisconsin Winter Outside Fun with Infants and Toddlers: Practical Suggestions and Fun Ideas for Outside Time

1. Get children ready in pairs as part of a social activity. Everything should be pulled together ahead of time. Talk to the children while you are dressing them. Ask for their cooperation. Children seem to appreciate being included in the process.
2. Integrate getting ready for outdoors as a part of your curriculum with toddlers and twos. Allow for extra time and use it to build self-help skills and vocabulary. Keep talking. Help children think about the order for putting things on. Cards with words and pictures by order are helpful

Outdoor Play

(Continued from page 4)

for children and staff. Have mirrors in the cubby area so children can check out their clothing application. Allow children to do as much as possible for themselves. Practicing use of zippers and fasteners is fine motor practice. Have a set of paper dolls with winter clothes with a flannel board to practice what goes on first.

3. Make outside time after lunch before nap time. Deep breathing and cool air uses up energy and makes children tired so that they nap well. Try putting on snow pants and boots before lunch. Then all that needs to go on is the jackets, mittens, and hats before going outside. Outside time can be great right after morning snack. When children know that food is waiting for them it motivates them to be cooperative in pulling on their snow pants and boots.
4. If there is more than one person in the classroom, let one person go outside with the children who are ready first. It eliminates waiting. Those ready first can assist the ones who are in the process.
5. Being flexible with staffing for infants will allow the infants to be taken out two at a time for about 10—20 minutes (depending on outside temperature).
6. Have small brooms and dustpans available for children to help in getting the play yard ready for play.
7. Winter activities can include:
 - Children being pulled around the yard on a large sled.
 - Shovels available to fill up dump trucks.
 - Large plastic blocks out for stacking or building forts or snow play.
 - Keep sidewalks clear and toddlers in large buggies can enjoy the winter scenery, or a walk around the neighborhood to notice decorations and changes.
 - Putting infants into flat-bottomed plastic infant bathtubs, pillows tucked around them, and pulling them around the yard.
 - Obstacle courses or pathways around the play yard with

caves and snow benches for children to climb in and out of, or on.



Adapted from Caring for the Little Ones by Karen Miller. Child Care Information Exchange 1/96

(Created by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) and [originally posted to the DCF website provider resources page](#)).

Child Care for Working Families Act: Advocacy Opportunity

The Child Care for Working Families Act bill ([H.R. 3773](#)) introduced to the House Committee on Education and Workforce in September of this year by Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and Congressman Bobby Scott (D-VA), seeks to “amend the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 and the Head Start Act to promote child care and early learning,” among other purposes.

Child Care Aware® of America and Child Care Aware® of Washington have worked to help get this bill introduced and to refine the language surrounding the bill. According to [Child Care Aware® of America’s one-pager](#), this bill seeks to ensure “low-income families pay no more than seven percent of their annual income on child care, [to] help young children gain access to preschool,” and to further support the child care workforce. The bill also contains provisions to establish and/or expand Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) networks.

In a [November webinar](#), Jay Nichols, Director of Federal Policy and Governmental Affairs at Child Care Aware® of America and Ryan Pricco, Director of Policy and Advocacy at Child Care Aware® of Washington shared progress on the bill, as well as future efforts to promote and support the bill through to law. Although currently the bill has only received support on the democratic side, the goal is to make this a bi-partisan effort.

The ongoing [Child Care Works](#) movement from Child Care Aware® of America will continue to be used as a platform for promoting this bill into 2018, and to develop partnerships within early childhood and cross-sector, around the importance of quality, accessible care. In the webinar Nichols emphasized CCR&Rs’ role in continuing to focus on education and data collection surrounding the importance of quality child care, while Child Care Aware® promotes the work and role of CCR&R networks alongside the bill. Current engagement strategies Child Care Aware® is using around the bill focus on engaging business leaders, and Child Care Aware® of Washington [provides several advocacy materials and resources](#) to engage business leaders in your area.

Stay tuned to the [Child Care Aware® of America site](#) for updates on the progress of this bill, or [sign up to receive updates](#).

Child Care Aware® OF AMERICA **Child Care Works**

Child Care for Working Families Act of 2017

On September 14, 2017, Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and Congressman Bobby Scott (D-VA) introduced the “Child Care for Working Families Act of 2017.”

Child care plays an important role in the U.S. economy, helping to generate 15 million jobs and more than \$500 billion in income annually. Families need child care so they can work and children need a safe place where they can learn and continue their healthy development. Unfortunately, far too many low-income families do not have access to high-quality care and cannot afford it. Over the past decade, the cost of child care has spiked, which has forced families to make difficult decisions about investing in care or being employed. On average, millions of working families pay more for child care than they would for a mortgage/rent, transportation needs, or food every month.

The Child Care for Working Families Act would ensure low-income families pay no more than seven percent of their annual income on child care, help young children gain access to preschool, and for the child care workforce. It would also help provide the necessary resources to establish and/or expand the child care resource and referral networks.

The bill would also:

- Create a federal-state child care partnership for children from birth through age 13.
- More than double the number of children eligible for assistance under the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), and ensure these children gain access to high-quality early learning programs.
- Help states create universal preschool programs for three and four year olds during the school day, and provide a higher matching rate for infants and toddlers.
- Support the child care workforce through increased training and compensation by ensuring they are paid a living wage.
- Establish provider payment levels that reflect higher wages and provide investment for scholarships.
- Improve the quality of care in home-based, family, and neighbor settings, and during non-traditional working hours to support families.
- Address the functional and access needs of children with disabilities (including infants and toddlers) in child care settings by increasing funding under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA.)
- Help Head Start provide full-day, full-year programming. Under this bill, eligible families are households who do not exceed 150 percent of a state median income, which is then gradually reduced through 2020. If enacted into law, over \$100 billion would be authorized in the first three years.

Staff Contacts

- **Congressman Bobby Scott (D-VA):** Alex Payne, Education Policy Advisor, (202) 225-1848, alex.payne@mail.house.gov
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Child Care Aware® of America & Child Care Works | Child Care for Working Families Act of 2017

SFTA Professional Development Department (PDD) Highlight

The online training, *The Process of Developing a Child Portfolio: Documenting a Journey* is in the final stages of development and SFTA's PDD hopes to have it piloted in the new year. This training will be available to Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) staff who can share content with child care providers in their service delivery areas. The training relates closely to the PDD webinars offered in June and August of 2017. Content will provide a foundation for what a portfolio entails, what information to collect, how to collect needed information, when and how to use information after it has been collected, and processes for sharing portfolios with families. The online training includes a lecture, discussion questions, animation and reflection within your practice.



While you're waiting, [have you checked out the PDD webpage recently?](#)

Staff Spotlight: Chanel Vang



Position: Office Manager & Micro-Grant Financial Support

Time with SFTA: 1 year

Favorite color: Blue and seafoam green

Favorite food: Sushi and sashimi

What is the best part about your job?

The best part about my job is that every day is different. I get to wear various hats and, in small ways, be involved in different programming areas at SFTA. I love learning new things and have gained a vast amount of knowledge about early childhood care and education. This has been wonderful because I am able to take this home and apply it to my personal life with my son.

What do you do for fun in your off time?

Movies and TV shows! I am that person who loves sitting on the couch binge watching Law & Order SVU episodes way into the night on days I am able to. I love Marvel and DC superhero films and am the biggest fan of Star Wars. Romantic comedies and crime shows are my go-to, however, my absolute favorite TV show is GAMES OF THRONES! Who knew that fantasy politics could be so gripping?!

Do you have a favorite memory from your time at SFTA?

My favorite memory at SFTA was my first day on the job. I remember thinking that first day, what a breath of fresh air it was to be part of such a great organization and positive team. The environment at SFTA encompasses everything I have ever wanted in a work environment. It is inviting, laid back, safe and supportive. Every single person is friendly and helpful.

What is your favorite children's book or toy and why?

My favorite children's book is *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. This was the first book I remember reading as a child. In the book, the caterpillar undergoes a journey from egg to butterfly and that development truly amazed me.

-- Thank you, Chanel!

SFTA Updates & Resources

- **PLEASE NOTE:** This newsletter will be on hiatus for Q1 of 2018, as a key SFTA staff member will be on maternity leave. Look for the next SFTA newsletter in Q2 of 2018, and meanwhile [browse through some of our past newsletters!](#)
- Check out this great collection of resources from Zero to Three regarding grandparents who care for their grandchildren, designed for grandparents and organizations serving grandparents and young families. [Grandparents: Sharing the Care](#)
- [Webinar: Legislative Children's Caucuses: A Road Map and Lessons Learned](#)
- The [Wisconsin Legislative Children's Caucus](#) is seeking presentations for its 2018 meetings. The first meeting will be on February 21, 2018 and subsequent 2018 meeting dates are TBD. Each meeting will include a presentation on evidence-informed programs and initiatives or research findings about what works to support the well-being of children and families. **Deadline for proposal submissions is January 8, 2018.** [Download the submission application here.](#)
- Save the Date for the [Wisconsin Nature Action Collaborative for Children \(WinACC\) Teachers Exploring Learning With Nature](#) event, February 10, 2018 at the Schlitz Audubon Nature Center. [Register online.](#)
- [Food From Farms: Toolkit for Direct Purchasing of Local Food](#) provides examples and templates for community-based local food procurement from farmers.

A Snapshot of Child Care Resource & Referral agencies (CCR&Rs) Q3 2017

Families in 85% of Wisconsin's counties and 3 First Nations were reached through child care referrals in Q3, with 2,066 unique families receiving referrals.

"A woman called our agency to find child care for her daughter. She saw a child care flyer with our number in a Hmong grocery store. She needed to find care immediately because her husband had just left her. She had no other family support, no transportation, and stated she would lose her job if she did not find child care. The Referral Specialist gave her child care information as well as information on free family events, city buses, and other community resources. Later that week, the Referral Specialist followed up. The mother was very excited because she had found care for her daughter and the bus stops in the front of the child care center her daughter attends. She can walk to her job from there. The mother thanked the Referral Specialist for listening and for giving necessary help when she was feeling distressed. If not for our agency, the woman feared both she and her daughter would have had to go to a homeless shelter. With the Referral Specialist's help, she could keep her job, her daughter has child care, and they have accessible public transportation. The woman said she would never forget the generosity and services provided by our agency."

- Child Care Resource & Referral, Inc., Kimberly

SFTA's 10 Member CCR&R Agencies

[4-C \(Community Coordinated Child Care, Inc.\)](#)

[4C for Children](#)

[Childcaring, Inc.](#)

[Child Care Partnership Resource & Referral Center](#)

[Child Care Resource & Referral, Inc.](#)

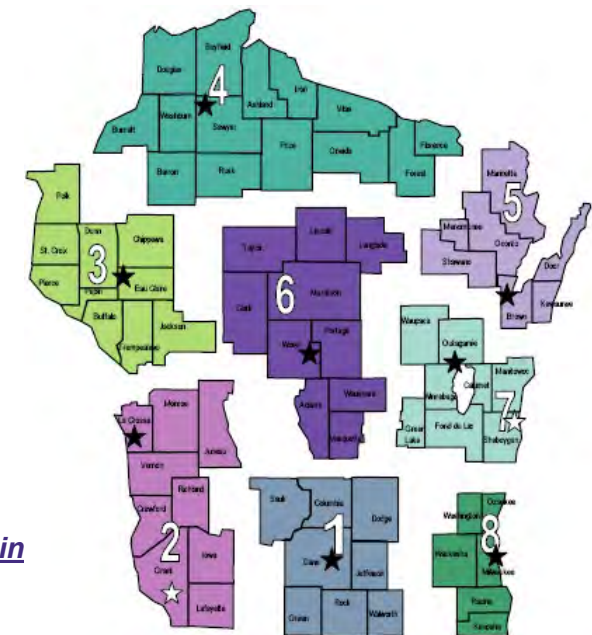
[Family & Childcare Resources of N.E.W.](#)

[Family Connections, Inc.](#)

[Family Connections of Southwest Wisconsin](#)

[Northwest Connection Family Resources](#)

[The Parenting Place](#)



Don't forget, you can always find your local Child Care Resource and Referral agency or Family Resource Center [on our website!](#)

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